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## Improvements in Afghanistan's Information and Communications Technology Lead to Economic Prosperity

**KABUL, AFGHANISTAN | APRIL 19, 2012** — In the past ten years, Afghanistan has made strides in the media sector, as outlined in a new report funded by the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID). The report is a part of activities under the Afghanistan Media Development & Empowerment Project implemented by Internews. With service coverage to more than 85% of the country's total population and 64% population penetration, telecom services are now available in all 34 provincial capitals.

The *State of Telecommunications and Internet in Afghanistan - Six Years Later 2006-2012* Report, reveals unique comparative industry statistics, showing consistent and strong growth in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector, heralding a positive future for this industry in Afghanistan. Despite numerous challenges, the telecom sector in Afghanistan has attracted over 1.8 billion USD in private investment and has generated more than 110,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities throughout the country. "This report is both an information bank presenting progress since 2006 and a baseline for future research and reporting on the ICT sector in Afghanistan," said the researcher Javid Hamdard of Internews at the press conference in Kabul today.

The report presents a comprehensive overview of the ICT sector in Afghanistan, covering developments and intersections across the areas of infrastructure, policy, Internet and telecommunication services. In a country characterized by low literacy levels, poor infrastructure, and an unstable security environment, a multitude of mediums, from radio and television, to the more recent adoption of mobile (Voice/SMS/IVR) and Internet technology helps accelerate access to information for ordinary citizens.

"We hope that this report will serve as a reference for all stakeholders, potential investors, policymakers and anyone else interested in the development of ICT sector in Afghanistan. New media technology offers enormous possibilities for the future of Afghanistan," said Asta Zinbo, a Civil Society and Media Team Leader at USAID Mission in Afghanistan.

USAID has invested in the growth of an independent media sector in Afghanistan since 2002, helping to establish a robust and energetic media sector. USAID also supports citizens' and civil society's access to multimedia training and production, and facilitates the use of new technologies such as cell phones to build platforms for citizen media access.

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